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### Deposited in DRO:

05 June 2017

### Version of attached file:

Accepted Version

### Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

### Citation for published item:

Burt, T. P. and Evans, H. M. (2016) 'Building characters, sharpening minds : the values and virtues of the collegiate way.', in The collegiate way : university education in a collegiate context. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, pp. 75-92. Contexts of education. (6).

### Further information on publisher's website:

[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-681-1\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-681-1_7)

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### Additional information:

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TIM BURT, MARTYN EVANS

## **7. BUILDING CHARACTERS, SHARPENING MINDS: THE VALUES AND VIRTUES OF THE COLLEGIATE WAY**

### OPENING DOORS INTO LARGER ROOMS: CONVERSATIONS ACROSS DISCIPLINES

Last weekend, 11 years on from graduation, I returned to Durham for a friend's bachelor's party. Three of the group present, including the 'stag' himself, had been students at Hatfield and there was a natural draw to stay in the college. As you can imagine there was plenty of reminiscing! We of course all reflected on the opportunities provided by the University itself. But our conversations centred more on our time in Hatfield College – stories of the friendships forged that remain today, the nurturing and caring environment, and the inimitable college spirit (formal dinners, college days) – all of which really shaped our University of Durham experience, and the emotional attachment we still have to the place today. (Olly Potts)

This quotation came to Tim in an email just as we were starting to draft this paper. What could be a better way to start! Friendship, affiliation, opportunity, support: the shaping of a university experience within a collegiate setting. Just to add that Olly and his sister Kate were both at Hatfield College. So too were the happy couple! But there's nothing unique in all that. Colleges are very special places and they do foster friendship, loyalty and commitment, attachments that lasts a lifetime.

When we decided to organise the Collegiate Way conference, the aims were immediately clear: to celebrate the collegiate way, to share experiences of collegiate life, and to identify and spread good practice. But our celebration was never unquestioning: after all, the proof of the pudding is in the eating and we always wanted to explore the diversity of college models, testing our assumptions and hearing about what works well elsewhere, even in apparently unlikely circumstances.

A college is, at its heart, an association or community of people having a common purpose: in the university context this common purpose is the pursuit of scholarship and understanding through education and research, at the core of the richest possible development of the whole person. Colleges come in different forms and according to different models, but whatever their constitution, colleges are first and foremost scholarly communities: special and distinct places where people come together as scholars within the setting of a shared community life. Thus, colleges support the common purposes and the ideals of both scholarship and community.

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How do they do this? By enabling an educational experience in which these ideals and common purposes can flourish.

A college is typically small enough to enable its members to experience university life on a smaller and more human scale – a scale that is both manageable and intimate (and see Terri Apter’s comments, in Chapter 9 of this Volume, about the ideal maximum size of a college community). The college community’s environment, whether or not fully residential, is one that is safe, supportive and inclusive – and one where its members will enjoy a sense of belonging, and will readily build lifelong affinities and loyalties as well as friendships. In a college community, a well-developed awareness of diversity and respect for others is not a bonus: along with self-discipline, it is an invaluable precondition of flourishing together. From respect comes willingness to share responsibility: a college community typically offers greatly increased opportunities for its members compared to non-collegiate situation and they carry the skills and virtues involved with them into employment and into life more generally.

Woodrow Wilson felt that a college was ‘not a place where a lad [or lass] finds a profession, but a place where he [or she] finds him [or her] self.’ We will return to the notion of a ‘good life’ at the end of this paper.

When a multitude of young [students], keen, open-hearted, sympathetic and observant, as young [people] are, come together and freely mix with each other, they are sure to learn from one another, even if there be no one to teach them; the conversation of all is a series of lectures to each, and they gain for themselves new ideas and views, fresh matter of thought, and distinct principles for judging and acting, day by day. (Newman, 1852)

#### OPENING DOORS INTO LARGER ROOMS: CONVERSATIONS ACROSS DISCIPLINES

The logo for our conference – and, perhaps, for its successors – was an opening door to which the words ‘The Collegiate Way,’ once read, lead the eye. The door in the logo represents in a literal sense the front doors to any and all colleges (and it is surprising how greatly college front doors vary from one another, and how much a front door can suggest of its college’s style, ethos, or warmth of atmosphere). But our idealised graphic door represents in a more symbolic way how colleges contain within themselves other doors into many rooms, rooms of new experiences and new understandings, each with windows on to the world, giving new and distinctive perspectives – not just a range of cultural perspectives or the perspectives of emerging adulthood, but also the disciplinary perspectives of academic subjects, ways of understanding, even of *seeing*, the world. Our symbolic front door stands for the invitation to step into these rooms, and to discover the world anew – surely one of the defining privileges of university study in a collegiate environment.

Of course, we have to want to step through into these larger rooms. We have to have a measure of self-security, a certain adventurousness (every year Martyn urges new Trevelyan College students to live adventurously, and he lives to regret it in only a very small minority of cases!) and, above all, we need to have curiosity – the driving impulse that probably brought our pre-human ancestors down from the trees in the first place. Curiosity is, in effect, our appetite to discover the world and, implicitly, to discover ourselves in the process. In the best cases, colleges are sanctuaries for and incubators of curiosity. Assuming that we have a measure of curiosity to begin with, then in terms of self-understanding a collegiate life offers us the encounter with a wider range of peers from varying backgrounds, cultures, affinities and faiths. Again, given the initial impetus of curiosity, then in terms of world-understanding the collegiate life offers us informed and intelligent companionship from the full range of subject-disciplines, the full gallery of windows upon the world.

T.S. Eliot once said that ‘We read many books because we cannot meet enough people.’ (1949, p.87) In collegiate life we certainly read, but we do more than read – we can actually meet and converse with exponents of almost every form of scholarly interest in the wider world, ambassadors for every province in the republics of the mind. At all stages of learning, reading benefits from the support of an experiential encounter in leading to understanding, and what more important kind of encounter than a conversation? After all, conversation is both a fine art worth constant nurturing and, as Mark Ryan has memorably put it, the very soul of the university. And – taking as our model here the assiduously-curious, but still well-rounded, undergraduate – after three or four years of virtual doors and windows, and very real conversations and the shared table, one emerges from the collegiate way with a bigger picture, a larger background in which to see oneself, and a larger range of influences upon how one may choose to think, to act, to be.

We might linger a while with academic curiosity. One hears it said that the UK secondary school system does a rather good job of squashing any student’s native curiosity under the weight of ready-to-go, learnable answers to be reproduced at the right time. To this we should add that, over half a century since C.P. Snow’s lament about the ‘two cultures,’ UK secondary education still tends to polarise students between arts and sciences. Of course, it is exceedingly difficult to maintain serious expertise across both domains, but it should always be possible – and must surely be desirable – to remain intelligently curious in both. Greg Clancey (in Chapter 2 of this Volume) describes one attempt, in Singapore, to achieve this.

The alternative is in effect to be wilfully blind to one half of the realm of human understanding, and to risk being dull in one’s transactions with the other half – that is, one’s own! Only curiosity across both domains can keep us alive to the realisation that the world is amenable to different forms of enquiry, yields different forms of evidence to different kinds of method, and presents itself very differently on different scales. Only a respectful awareness of the kinds of knowledge that we do not possess in detail will ensure our modesty about the limits of the knowledge we *do* possess. Only when the exponents of sciences and humanities reliably converse with each other can they know when the words they use are borrowed

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metaphors and when they are authentic descriptions. An originally UK-based, now international, movement called ‘Café Scientifique’ tries to address this problem by arranging conversations between specialists and lay people, in informal settings in which the idea of a café is taken very seriously, and where the practical and social challenges of science and technology are explored. With elements of both the expert and (in the best sense of the word) the amateur, of both structure and spontaneity, of thoughtful challenge and relaxation around a table, the Café Scientifique is a very collegial arrangement, embodying outside in the town centre many of the virtues and some of the style of a senior common room conversation within a college, with or without gowns. This is just the sort of thing that an actual college can do, and do well – and, as it happens, John Snow College at Durham University recently celebrated the tenth anniversary of its establishing the Stockton Café Scientifique, one of the biggest and best-attended in Britain, making science accessible to non-scientists in a worthwhile way.

The reverse challenge is to make knowledge in the humanities recognisable to science – and to make humanities *critiques* meaningful, appreciated as more than self-indulgence. This is a challenge that applies just as much to our still-idealist science undergraduates as to our world-weary senior scientific grant-holders. Intellectual life ought, perhaps, never to be comfortable – irritation is to the active brain as grit is to the oyster’s pearl – but there are degrees of discomfort that do not help. We should as scholars be reasonably comfortable in our own skins, but prepared to share our comforts and discomforts beyond our disciplines, and mutually so.

So, in our colleges we must encourage our students not only to enter the unfamiliar doorways and look out on to new aspects of the world through fresh casement windows, but also to come back into the common hallway, the concourse from which the individual doors lead off, and gather in conversation about what they have seen, in terms that they can all share – however imperfectly – recognising the variety among knowledge’s forms and treasures.

#### A COLLEGIATE WAY OF LIVING: COMMUNITY, CITIZENSHIP, CHARACTER

The practical benefits of collegiate life are far wider than academic, of course, and to engage in them is to engage more fully in the life of a scholarly community, as Newman observed. For our students, these benefits include learning to take responsibility for managing their own affairs, as well as seizing hold of the joys of creative leisure and recreation: opportunities to take part in representative sport at all levels of ability, or to engage adventurously in music and the performing arts, or to try out new entertainments, skills and pastimes, or to discover how the world looks to people from significantly different backgrounds from their own – and to be able to take refreshment and stimulation from all these experiences, and carry it back into their approaches to study. Taken together, this is what being scholars living in community means.

To take each of the three words in the section heading in turn:

*Community*

In relation to the college community itself, we have two ideas to consider: the structure of the college community and its spirit. The word *college* itself comes simply enough from the Latin *collegium*: it is where we get the word collegial from. There is always an awkward tautology with the words: college, collegial, collegiality and colleague. We can define colleagues as those explicitly united in a common purpose. If colleagues show respect for another's commitment to the common purpose and their shared ability to work toward it, then collegial suggests consensus, the concept of shared responsibility where every member feels ownership, united in a common purpose, 'part of it.'

Our second idea comes from the Greek word *koinonia* meaning 'a close association involving mutual interests and sharing.' It is a fundamental concept pointing to how people should behave and interact – and what should characterise interpersonal behaviour. It is the Greek ideal of 'collegiality' therefore. If *collegium* refers to the organisation, then *koinonia* emphasises the common spirit that exists between the members of the college, inspiring a sense of shared purpose and pride. It invokes notions of community, participation and sharing and, by implication, of generosity and altruism. A symbol of this is eating together, the fellowship of the common table, sharing life and conversation, social and academic.



*Figure 1: Formal dinner at Hatfield College (photo by Sam Gard)*

### *Citizenship*

Commitment to the community leads inevitably to a sense of citizenship. It is why, quite properly, student bodies are self-governing. Students naturally take responsibility for the organisation of their own activities; in this sense, there is the paradox of the head of the college *not* running the college – only students can run their own clubs and societies. Of course, there are governance and managerial matters for the college authorities, in which the students play their part, but for much of college life, the college officers are facilitators. The days are long gone when Merton College, Oxford could prescribe diligence, sobriety, chastity and other personal virtues!



*Figure 2. Competitive teamwork: inter-collegiate rowing on the River Wear. (Photo by Tim Burt)*

All this encourages teamwork: volunteering, taking on leadership roles, organising community life, setting goals, mobilising participation, balancing views and opinions, spending funds wisely, balancing time commitments between personal and group activities. Of course, these things go on in all universities: the point is that colleges give many more opportunities for students to participate in meaningful ways. Taking part in activities for the common good engenders a strong sense of civic commitment which is sure to feed back into later life. College

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graduates tend to be committed, eager to become involved and keen to succeed; they invariably put more back than they take. This is underpinned by continuing loyalty to the college, even when no longer living within the college precincts. All members of a college expect to do their fair share in maintaining their college community.

It is worth dwelling for a moment on the almost frenetic activity of our students. One of the reasons we have included university as well as college activities is that the one underpins the other. We believe that high participation in the Durham colleges feeds through to high performance at university level. Durham University is the second most successful sporting university in the country: no wonder perhaps when you look at the number of college sports teams. A quick glance at the *Team Durham* website reveals some surprising numbers. Durham is not known as a soccer university but we have 75 men's soccer teams playing in the college leagues; at the time of writing Collingwood College alone had 10 teams! Other numbers included: 18 women's soccer teams, 17 mixed lacrosse, 24 ultimate frisbee, 18 mixed badminton. The point is that all this needs organising, let alone taking part. Thus, many of our students take on executive roles: captain, secretary, treasurer, and so on. All players need to manage their time and commit to the team.

### *Character*

Might we dare to suggest that colleges build character even more than intellect? The Rule of Merton is long gone but the need for students to mature remains, even in a modern, secular university. Elsewhere in this volume, Terri Apter describes the difficult transition between adolescence and adulthood. She has coined the term 'thresholder' to identify young people who are legally adult but stuck on the threshold of adulthood, held back by their inexperience (see Chapter 9). Being an active member of the college community encourages students to be mutually respectful, tolerant and considerate; to be honest and reliable; to treat everyone fairly and with dignity; to be kind, compassionate, forgiving and grateful; above all, to take responsibility for their own actions and for each other. This commitment to one's self, to each other and to the community is at the heart of what colleges have to offer. Commitment to the personal and social complements the need to take responsibility for academic progress and achievement.

Graduation with a good class of degree is every student's objective, and rightly so, but most of what we have written about community, citizenship and character is beyond the scope of the academic departments. As Mark Ryan has observed, scholarly specialisation does not guarantee liberal culture or commitment to a student's personal development. Colleges add immeasurably to both, enabling 'high-participation' in what might otherwise be a rather limited process.

## SUPPORTING THE ACADEMY

How do colleges best support the academy – or, more broadly, how do they best uphold the main purposes of the modern university? Evidently that depends on



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what one takes those main purposes to be, and our collegiate perspective upon this question will naturally colour the items on the list that we put forward.

Here are some candidates as we see them. First, let us list them as they might appear in order of primacy to a non-collegiate university:

1. Growing students' knowledge in subjects appropriate to what they want to do in life and in work;
2. Generating new knowledge and new understanding of the world both practical and theoretical, both scientific and humanistic;
3. Contributing to and extending the knowledge-based economy;
4. Helping students to learn *how* to learn, and how to teach themselves;
5. Supporting students' personal development in readiness for taking their places in society and in employment;
6. Enabling students to experience and respect diversity and growing the next generation of leaders in all aspects of modern society;
7. Being a repository for and guardian of civic values.

There may be others but these seem to cover the main heads.

The view from a collegiate university might look a little different. So, here are those same seven purposes re-ordered – not, perhaps, exactly in terms of their absolute importance, but more in terms of their centrality to the distinctive 'mission' of colleges. They now all have new positions on the list:

1. Supporting students' personal development in readiness for taking their places in society and in employment;
2. Enabling students to experience and respect diversity and growing the next generation of leaders in all aspects of modern society;
3. Helping students to learn *how* to learn, and how to teach themselves;
4. Being a repository for and guardian of civic values;
5. Growing students' knowledge in subjects appropriate to what they want to do in life and in work;
6. Contributing to and extending the knowledge-based economy;
7. Generating new knowledge and new understanding of the world both practical and theoretical, both scientific and humanistic.

No doubt people will vary in where we they greatest emphasis, and some might not all want to include all the points, but it seems worth asking where amongst these a university might obtain greatest benefit simply from *being collegiate*. Here is our own priority list:

<i>Clearly yes:</i>	1, 2, 3, 4
<i>Reasonably yes:</i>	5, 6
<i>Contestably yes:</i>	7

We do not have space to address all of these points at length, so we will offer thoughts on 7, 3 and 5 with some caveats – perhaps surprisingly – around 1. We will have something to say on 4 (and implicitly 2) towards the end of this chapter.

We have described 7 – generating new knowledge and understanding of the world – as ‘contestable,’ inasmuch as it will require our defence against scepticism elsewhere in academe. We wonder how many of us in collegiate universities have heard it lamented that money spent on colleges is money denied to laboratories, or post-doctoral fellows, or research infrastructure? Most of us, we assume. And the *concern* at least is legitimate, albeit in our view misplaced. If universities’ striving for new understanding were systematically to be starved of both impetus and resources, then students’ personal development, however ornate, would seem to be a side-issue; and if the cost of colleges really did bring about this dolorous state of affairs, then we would have some very hard questions to answer.

But that is simply not how things stand. In terms of research impetus, collegiate universities stimulate cross-disciplinary conversation *as a way of life*! Curiosity is a hallmark of the mutual – and radical – encounter of different disciplinary perspectives, at all levels of seniority of study.



Figure 3. Students in conversation with Bob Taylor-Vaisey at Collegiate Way 2014

Locating research centres and institutes within the physical precincts of colleges takes advantage of the latter’s being natural cross-disciplinary conversational ‘homes’ for framing new questions in novel ways. In Durham, the colleges have close and cordial relations with the University’s Institute of Advanced Study, a veritable flashpoint of cross-disciplinarity. That Institute’s recent annual theme was ‘Emergence,’ which is as good a name as any for those fundamentally unpredictable questions (questions, note, let alone answers) that arise when

different disciplinary perspectives collide, as they do in our senior common rooms. Conversations – remember Mark Ryan’s observation that conversations are the soul of a university – are themselves emergent (and hence unpredictable) properties both of the conversants and of what they bring to the table, and colleges are in a uniquely fortunate position to stimulate and sustain those conversations that lead to the questions subsequently most effectively pursued in libraries and laboratories.

Turning now from research to teaching, how might colleges support students’ learning, both in terms of learning *how* to learn and in the matter of growing their subject-knowledge? General support for study skills, and for the provision of study space, supplementary library/IT resources and mentor groups within colleges, speak for themselves. Students who feel at home are happy and confident; students who are confident have fewer qualms about asking for information and acknowledging where their understanding or knowledge are incomplete. But this is something that we can profitably extend beyond the generic matter of study skills into specific academic support in individual disciplines and degree subjects.

We are going to venture into contested territory here, but let us just dwell on that business of feeling ‘at home’ and the confidence it engenders, because it encourages students to ask questions not merely in the context of study skills but also within the subject matter of their academic degrees. Thus, a sense of affinity joins with a sense of place in making the precincts of a college a very natural abode in which to place subject-specific tutorial groups. Somewhat against the grain of traditional practice at Durham, recently Trevelyan College has piloted this form of tutorial support with two departments, Mathematics, and Music, who were keen to try it. The idea concerns the tutorial support that students would have received anyway in mixed-college groups within the premises of the department. In our pilot scheme, this support is re-timetabled for first-year Trevelyan students, in order to be conducted as a college affinity group in a designated and properly equipped room within the college. Were this to be generalised to other subjects and other colleges, it might offer some of the benefits of the Oxbridge tutorial system while retaining the important advantage that the content and delivery of the tutorials remain firmly within the sovereignty of the academic department. We do not yet know how successful the pilot will be, although we can be confident that it will receive minute scrutiny...

What this experiment exemplifies, of course, is the key virtue of presenting the broader university community on a more intimate scale. But this leads us to another awkward question, namely that of whether every college should proportionally reproduce an exact scale model of the larger university community’s population. Unlike the previous question which awakens departmental sensitivities, this one is we suspect more provocative among colleges. In Durham, small departments with small annual intakes still have their students divided among all colleges, leading to the phenomenon of what one might call ‘making sure we all get at least one of everything,’ and incurring the risk that some subject quotas in smaller colleges fall below what one might regard as critical mass. We see no really compelling reason why we all have to some of absolutely everything, and no reason not to grow subject affinities between some departments and some colleges or groups of

colleges in order to preserve workable subject populations. Were we to combine this with college-based subject tuition, we would in the process continue to uphold – indeed, we suggest, make more meaningful – multi-disciplinarity in colleges, but without attempting *omni*-disciplinarity.

Just before we leave the question of academic support, let us mention a contribution colleges make in terms of material sustainability. We hope some readers might recognise it in their own institutions. It is this: collegiate universities by their very nature are especially able to recruit interesting and engaged students, and are especially good at retaining them through thick and thin all the way to completion of their degrees. Student retention is a prized indicator of a university's success, and with good reason. In crude financial terms, in the UK the added retention value alone generates – for a research-led university of Durham's size – something like an additional £1m of preserved *tuition* fees annually, for each additional percentage point of student retention. In a safe city with a world heritage site, we cannot attribute all of this retention 'bonus' to the colleges, but it is hard to think that the colleges do not play a very significant part in fostering a university experience that is sufficiently attractive – and sufficiently well-supported when students encounter difficulties – as to make the difference between a student's dropping out of study and her carrying on to the completion of her degree. The colleges' contribution here is, of course, on top of any accommodation or other income that they generate in their ordinary operation. Like many aspects of collegiate 'added value,' work needs to be done to identify and correctly attribute how colleges help deliver the mission *and* balance the books – but the work we believe *can* be done, and perhaps colleagues elsewhere have already broken some of the ground in this regard.

We have now touched on purposes 7, 3 and 5, concerning research and academic learning. We will conclude this section with a few thoughts on purpose number 1, readying students for taking their places in society and in employment. As its number suggests, this might seem our prime directive. But it needs caution. Modern universities need to achieve this goal without intensifying the already-present danger of the *instrumentalising* of education. Education seems to us to be an intrinsic good. By contrast, employment is itself surely instrumental to other things – defining and achieving one's own sense of purpose, either directly through one's work, or indirectly, through contributing to economic productivity of which one receives a share that is sufficient to support one's other goals and purposes. In this sense it is abundantly true that 'education is for life, not just for employment.' Hence, as a previous Vice-Chancellor of Durham University used to advise students on entry into the University, 'Don't let your degree get in the way of your education!'

How do colleges achieve this? One clue is to be found in the generally higher extra-curricular attainment – in terms of sport, music, the arts, community action, volunteering – that characterises collegiate universities compared to standard ones. The highest summits of university achievement in these fields are the apex of a pyramid with a far broader base – produced by college-level participation – than one would elsewhere find. Whether it be in terms of peer-representation,

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leadership, organisational drive and initiative, or team-working, colleges multiply the opportunities that students have to try out for size the roles that they will eventually take on 'for real.' We have to make sure that we continue to do this in a spirit that does not instrumentalise it – and we have also to learn how to recognise when our students' ideas are better than our own in this regard. This thought brings us to the question of humility, and its place among other virtues that living in the collegiate way might embody. We will come back to that in the final sections.

#### A SENSE OF BELONGING

From Day One (and perhaps even before that), colleges provide a network of social connections that greatly ease the unsettling transition into university life. College-organised induction programmes can be highly effective, an immediate indication of the student community and the layers of welfare support available (from student welfare teams to college officers and mentors). And even before arrival, these days social media provide a familiar means of introducing newcomers to the students who will greet them (known as "Freshers' reps" in Durham) and to each other: for example, room-mates where rooms are to be shared and other neighbours. Colleges provide a ready-made circle of friends, an introduction to the wider student community, and an immediate sense of the institutional support available. In the old days, there was much printing of Freshers' handbooks containing vital information (as vital to parents as to the new students, no doubt) but now this can be provided more attractively and accessibly on-line.

Even before the allocation process is complete, application to a collegiate university, often with the opportunity to pick a particular college, ensures initial commitment. Of course, applicants do not always get their first-choice college and in some universities, college places are allocated without students having any choice in the matter. We would argue strongly that choice is important and that the opportunity to select a college, on whatever basis of preference, starts the process of affiliation. This may be cemented through post-offer visits, a chance to convince applicants that they have made a wise choice; conversion rates are invariably high. However it may be that students end up at a given college, we know that the large majority become fiercely loyal to their college very quickly, a process cemented by the college's central role in welcoming and induction. Very few students arrive, unpack, then pack up and leave in a hurry. Arrival is the start of a highly successful student retention process where colleges are clearly central to a low drop-out rate compared to non-collegiate institutions. Many students meet on day one some of the most influential people in their lives to come – possibly their future life partner but much more likely a group of firm, long-lasting, loyal friends.

In one sense, all the colleges in a particular university look much the same to an outsider. From the inside, subtle differences loom large and are very important in defining each of the colleges and setting them apart from their peers. Much of this has to do with their differing history, location and architecture. History is often important in terms of rituals and symbols, with older colleges perhaps being more wedded to their traditions (although these can evolve remarkably quickly in any

college, as Greg Clancey notes in Chapter 2); more modern colleges both decry the stuffy traditionalists and adopt rituals and symbols of their own. Most have a coat of arms, a motto and a chosen colour. Henry Ford would approve of the principle: you can have any colour you like in Hatfield College, Durham as long as it is midnight blue! Out of these things come affiliation and commitment.



*Figure 4: 'Guardian Angel' snow-sculpture at Trevelyan, by international students embracing their new home (and some encountering snow for the first time!)*

Having arrived, the quickly-achieved sense of belonging translates equally rapidly into a strong attachment, as our opening quotation illustrates. Years and even decades later, alumni continue to care deeply about their college and about the college system in general. This is Olly Potts' 'emotional attachment', still firm in the minds of him and his college friends after more than a decade away. Alumni support can be important in many ways: financial support is the obvious avenue but, in an increasingly competitive world, equally helpful can be mentoring, careers advice and the offering of internships. Alumni also provide an important pressure group, their innate conservatism helping to resist the radical reforms of an increasingly centralised university management. There is always argument about the 'cost' of running a collegiate system but this must be set against the benefits. One of the enduring values of the collegiate way is the strong sense of affiliation of

students, past and present; this is the envy of many non-collegiate universities and therefore, in our view, not to be risked unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly.

Of course, a brand new college must lack alumni but eventually the numbers build up. Josephine Butler College, opened in 2006, is now holding alumni reunions. Most colleges do so, of course, and if alumni cannot come to the college, then the college goes to them. Hatfield's annual reunion in a pub in S.W. London is a good example – London is where most of them go after graduation so it is a sensible place to meet up. Eventually, we hope that a few of our alumni become very well known, and the college can bask in reflected glory. A few years ago, Durham boasted the head of the Army and the captain of the England cricket team; it was cause for pride for the whole University, of course. As it happened, both men were from the same college, which smugly celebrated for as long as the situation lasted.

#### THE GOOD LIFE: THE BROAD VALUE OF THE COLLEGIATE WAY

Oliver Edwards once said 'I have tried too in my time to be a philosopher, but, I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in.' (Boswell 1835, p.153) We are going to try and turn the tables on Edwards – to be philosophical and cheerful with it, because 'the good life' in the sense we intend here entails the philosophical question of how we *ought* to live, where 'good' means something like 'worthwhile' and not just hedonistically desirable. We do not deny that you can find hedonism from time to time in even the best-regulated colleges, and very glad we are too! Even so, the broader value of the collegiate way is something to do with how we collaboratively prepare to live lives that flourish *for others* as well as for ourselves – which means that 'the good life' and 'living well' have in part an ethical tinge to them, and it is in that sense that we need to use those terms here. Colleges are experiments in ways of living, and in living not 'merely' but 'well': experiments that are exuberant, yet safeguarded by their formal and informal support networks; improvised, yet modulated by shared purpose and endeavour. And though not very controlled or always systematically observed, they remind us of the spirit of adventurous enquiry.

If the goal of such 'experiments' in living is to find out as far as we can the aspects of what a good life might be for each of us, in collegiate life the *means* typically consist in trying out various forms of collaboration within a common purpose – catalysed by, or condensed around, simply doing things together. These collaborations might, but certainly need not, have a direct ethical purpose – after all, they range all the way from collectively watching soaps in the college TV lounge at the more passive end of the spectrum, to the more manic forms of charity fundraising at the other end. The point is that cooperation is presumptively ethical in and of itself, if it involves giving way individually in order to reach a benefit for all. What distinguishes residential college life in this respect is its abundance of available common purposes, and its signature combination of critical mass, concentrated resources, and precedent: colleges are simply bristling with opportunities to act together, benefiting from tradition or long experience and

collective knowledge – or, for that matter, a hard-earned reputation to defend – and from the sheer numbers of energetic and motivated participants brought all together in one place.

Let us take music as an immediately obvious illustration, though others might have chosen sport, or voluntary work, or student politics, or other performing arts. Most people would recognise that collaborative, practical music-making can epitomise the notion of coordinated and cooperative action in pursuit of shared purpose and ideals. Moreover, it requires dedication and commitment; and it calls for a balance to be struck between established conventions and new improvisation – in other words, for experiment. Its results benefit both the performers and – generally – those around them. Musical cooperation in ensemble playing requires the players to be mutually sensitive and to ‘entrain’ themselves one to another – to converge in tempo, intonation, dynamics, style, even the very conception of the music they are playing. Moreover music not only brings its own reward – it *is* its own reward, illustrating the idea of something that is good for its own sake and not merely for other things that it helps access. Much the same is true for the other performing arts, and true also of attainment in sport, especially team sport; and some of it is true in collective student organisation and representation – these other things, of course, having also their own virtues for which perhaps no counterparts exist in music. In colleges these things are not occasional add-ons that one might be lucky enough to stumble upon; they are the daily fabric of collegiate life and flourishing. Among other things the good life is distinguished from mere life by the opportunity to encounter and appreciate beauty in all its forms: the life of the mind best flourishes in an environment that has beauty within it or around it, and the establishment and operation of our colleges must uphold this.

But however rich the stimulation that surrounds us, while enthusiasm and the desire to act cooperatively are positive energisers of what we might call ‘the good life’ they still need to be well-tuned as well, harnessed towards outcomes whose point will be understood and appreciated by others. Our enthusiasm and energy will be directed towards ‘the good life’ if the ‘energetics’ that they embody are tuned, or tempered, by courtesy and respect for others. In collegiate life we can develop an adult conception of both, such that they replace mere obedience to authority. So, for example, we soon learn that in the performing arts, courtesy and mutual respect among the performers are formalised in conventions and in grasping and embracing the director’s or conductor’s conception, and they are tested in the ensuing artistic performance. Things are a little less sophisticated, perhaps, in sport; yet where courtesy and respect are formalised by rules and codes, they are tested not only in the discipline shown on the field, but also in the expression of fair play and sportsmanship. Rules of course are paradoxical things: recognised attainment is inconceivable without them (otherwise how is attainment to be measured?) and even improvisation, say in artistic performance, is possible only if there are rules to stretch. On the other hand, taking personal responsibility for anything is inconceivable if rules tie everything down – only if we were free to have acted poorly could we be said, in the event, to have acted well.





*Figure 5: Shakespeare in the Trevelyan College inner quad.*

Above all collegiate life is an education in *living*. Stuart Hampshire distinguished as a goal for us all that we work out for ourselves our own conception of an authentically good life. (Hampshire 1989) Even without saying it out loud in such terms, nonetheless in collegiate life we quietly uphold each other in working out that conception, and in starting to pursue it. There is something vital about that word ‘quietly’ in ‘quietly upholding each other.’ When unbridled, affinity too readily becomes ‘tribalism,’ which is not merely exclusionary in itself but, when expressed rowdily, can be found actually threatening; even the best-intentioned common purposes can have their downside. Again, self-conscious collective identity can be framed in different ways, not all of them desirable: as well as celebration, there are also the hazards of collective introversion, complacency, smugness, even narcissism. So to live the collegiate life as a good life, even our sense of college affinity needs to be moderated through what is best regarded as virtue. The range of our common purposes should be tempered by at least a flavour of the scholarly or the exploratory; our shared values should include modesty and respect; and our conception of living together should establish the role of *endeavour* and encouragement tempered by moderation – by the avoidance of excess, in Aristotle’s terms (and, after all, the good and virtuous life we have been sketching is rather Aristotelian in spirit).

We shall finish with a perhaps rather surprising reflection on what a philosopher, Martin Milligan, blind almost from birth, wrote in response to an enquiry about how, and in what sense, he knew that he was blind. As a child, he

slowly realised that his parents could find, without touching or listening, the toys that he could find by touching or listening *only*. They had – in his words –

...knowledge of the same thing as I knew when I touched the toy, but gained in a way not open to me. And if on occasion they would say that they couldn't see where my toy was, because it was too dark, I would gather that this way of knowing, open to them but not to me, was not even open to them under all conditions; and that 'darkness' was the term for a condition in which they could not exercise their extra way of knowing. I would therefore pick up the idea that 'seeing' was the term for a way of coming by information of a kind that could also be obtained, but often less quickly, by touching or listening, and that, like touching or hearing, it was a way of getting to know things dependent partly on parts of the body functioning well, and partly on external conditions. In other words, as I eventually learned to say, sight was a 'sense'. To understand this about the word 'see' ... is to understand something very important, something which is quite enough to make meaningful for me the proposition that I am blind. (Magee & Milligan, 1995, pp. 9-10)

Understanding that the world has much that is as-yet unseen by us is the beginning of humility about what it is that we do see. Education in general, and the collegiate way in particular, is an invitation to walk through doors into larger rooms – but if we cannot, or will not, see the doors then we cannot, or will not, enter through them; and then the rooms themselves and the world through their casement windows will remain unseen. That suggests to us that humility – or its closest equivalent in Aristotelian terms, modesty – is the first enabling virtue for any larger understanding of the world, and would be an excellent first virtue in, as Mark Ryan so felicitously phrases it, 'the collegiate way of living.'

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